

# Home Freezing of Vegetables

**FNH-00264**

For many Alaskans, freezing is the preservation method of choice for fresh vegetables grown in their home garden or purchased in quantity from local farmers or markets.

Most vegetables should be **BLANCHED** before they are frozen to maintain texture, color and taste for storage periods of up to a year. Blanching is the process of heating food briefly in boiling water, then cooling quickly in cold water to prevent further cooking. This short heating period inactivates enzymes in plant tissues that cause food to slowly deteriorate even at freezing temperatures. Heating also wilts and slightly softens vegetables so they can be packed more tightly into freezer containers or bags.

## EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

For heating vegetables:

blanching kettle **with lid** or large pot **with lid** and wire basket (or metal colander) that fits inside

For cooling vegetables:

large bowl or pot

colander

knife and/or vegetable peeler

kitchen timer

freezer bags or rigid freezer containers\*

waterproof marker

plenty of fresh, cold water

\* Use bags labeled for freezer use. Regular storage bags are thinner and suitable for short-term refrigerator storage only. Freezer bags are available with either self-locking or twist-tie closures. Rigid square plastic freezer containers work best for freezing mashed or liquid foods. Frozen vegetables may also be packaged using a vacuum sealer.

*The information used in this publication was taken from Home Freezing of Fruits and Vegetables, USDA Home and Garden Bulletin No. 10 and So Easy To Preserve, Third Edition, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.*

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*Photos by Tom Thompson, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc.*

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## Step-By-Step Blanching Instructions

1. Select young, tender, high quality produce for freezing. Refrigerate fresh vegetables until you are ready to begin blanching.
2. Wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water.

Trim stem ends.

Peel root vegetables (except beets).  
Sort food by size or cut into uniform-sized pieces so each batch will heat evenly.

3. Over high heat, bring one gallon or more of water to boil in the blanching kettle.

Fill the other large bowl or pot with cold water (under 60 °F).

4. Place about one pound of prepared vegetables into the blanching basket or colander and lower into the boiling water.

Vegetables should be completely immersed in the water.

Cover kettle and begin timing immediately.

5. Heat vegetables for the time recommended in the Blanching Table on the back page.

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**Note: Overblanching results in a cooked product, underblanching can stimulate enzyme activity; either error will reduce the quality of the frozen food.**





6. At the end of the recommended time, lift the basket of vegetables out of the kettle, drain momentarily, and immediately plunge into the cold water.

Vegetables should be cooled for the same amount of time that they were heated.

To cool mashed vegetables, place in shallow pan and set into cold water, stirring occasionally to hasten cooling.



7. After cooling, lift the vegetables out of the cold water and let drain in the blanching basket or transfer them to a colander.

When processing several batches of vegetables, change the cooling water often or add ice to keep it cold.

8. When excess water has drained from vegetables, pack them into freezer bags.

Use pint or quart size depending on the number of servings needed for one meal, but avoid overfilling.

Try to eliminate as much air as possible as you seal the bags.

If using rigid freezer containers, leave ½-inch headspace to allow for the food to expand.

Headspace is not needed for loosely packed foods such as broccoli spears.



9. Label bags or containers with a waterproof pen, listing the name of product, the number of servings and the date processed.

10. Place packages in the freezer, arranging them loosely or in a single layer so they freeze quickly.



## Blanching Chart

The size and density of the vegetable determines the time needed for heat to completely penetrate the food. Use the longer recommended blanching times for larger-sized vegetables.

VEGETABLE	PREPARATION (size in inches)	HEATING TIME in boiling water (minutes)	COMMENTS
Beans, snap	2 to 4"	3	
Beet	small whole medium whole	25 to 30 45 to 50	cook until skin slips off, dice or slice
Broccoli	1½" diameter spears chopped	3 1½ to 2	peel stalks if desired
Brussels sprouts	small heads medium heads	3 4	trim outer leaves
Cabbage	shredded or chopped	1½	stir for even heating
Carrot	small whole ¼" slices or strips	5 2	
Cauliflower	1" flowerets	3	add 4 teaspoons of salt per gallon of water to prevent darkening
Celery	1" lengths	3	for cooking uses only
Corn, sweet	whole cob kernels	7 to 11 4	wrap each cob, then bag blanch on cob, then cut
Greens including chard, collards, kale, mustard, spinach	whole or chopped	3 (collards) 2 (other greens)	stir for even heating
Kohlrabi	½" cubes	1	peel
Onion	whole bulb rings	3 to 7 10 to 15 seconds	for cooking uses only batter before freezing if desired
Parsnip	½" cubes	2	
Peas	shelled edible pod sugar snap	1½ 1½ to 2 2 to 3	wash in pan to float off debris
Pepper	halved ½" strips	3 2	blanching optional
Potato			freezing is not recommended
Rutabaga	½" cubes mashed	3 until soft	boil or steam chunks, then mash
Squash, summer including zucchini	½" slices grated	3 1 to 2 (steam)	freeze in measured amounts for baking
Squash, winter including pumpkin	mashed	until soft	bake, steam or boil, scrape from rind, and mash
Tomato, stewed	peeled, quartered	until soft	heat in own juices until cooked (10 to 20 minutes)
Turnip	½" cubes mashed	2 until soft	boil or steam chunks, then mash